

A BLACK CIVILIZATION

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835 copulating with their wives, thereby forcing the wawa to defend his brother from their vengeance.

607 Because all of the members of a group of brothers are all due to the same galle and the women thereby are the potential wives of all yuki-yukos of this group, there is a strong tribal rule that no yuki-yuko can talk to or be near wawa's wives, but wawa can talk to and be near yuki-yuko's. (This would not be true of a woman beyond the age when she would be sexually interested in yuki-yuko, nor of boys below the age of puberty.) The rule holds against all yuki-yukos, near or distant, except where blood brothers are involved who have a tremendous love and trust in each other. Breaking of the rule by blood brothers was observed, but not by tribal brothers.

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587 There is still another method by which the junior levirate operates. A wawa often gives one or two of his younger wives to yuki-yuko. These wives may merely be those promised by a gawel and for whom wawa has made presents (wawa would be forced to obtain permission from gawel in this case); or wawa may give yuki-yuko wives he has already lived with, in which circumstances permission need not be asked.

If wawa has four or five wives, he may say to a single yuki-yuko, "You see that one—you take her and feed her." Yuki-yuko usually says, if wawa is an old man, "No, you are an old man. I'll wait until you die, then I'll have them all." Wawa replies, "No, you take her now, yuki-yuko. I have many wives and you have none." Yuki-yuko then takes her, and she belongs to him permanently. Wawa loses all right to her sexually and economically, and she cannot be returned to him. If yuki-yuko died, his new wife would go to his younger brother, even though he were not consanguine but only tribal.

Ordinarily a man would present his younger brother with a wife if particularly pleased with some exploit of yuki-yuko's, such as the successful termination of a punitive expedition against common enemies.

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583 One of Warlumbopo's older brothers (actual) had been ambushed and mortally wounded by a tribal yuki-yuko.

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587 Shortly after this Warlumbopo walked into the camp of the dying man. Warlumbopo waited for his dead brother. He refused to allow the wives of the dead man to bury him until he had killed the slayer of his wawa, when he returned to his dead brother and buried him.

When Daurlung, an older brother to Warlumbopo and younger to the dead man, heard the news he said, "We'll get all our Ritango people

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tribal law, the waku of gawel and the gurrong of mokul would have been the same person; with the wrong marriage a discord is created in the first ascending generation, and sometimes considerable time elapses before a woman is taken in marriage. 582

After marriage a young man usually lives for a short period of varying length with his parents-in-law. After this he may go to his own people and take his wife with him. There is often much protest by the wife when she leaves her parents, but they aid her husband. When a child is born, its parents, if not already with the wife's parents, return there so the grandparents can see the baby. This is only for the first child, although the parents of both the husband and wife are always pleased and anxious to see all the grandchildren. 591 [54]

When a girl leaves her parents for the first time, a younger brother accompanies her (see page 65), a custom called "olokork." (The sister's husband is also due to her young brother, just as this younger brother is galle to his sister's due.) The husband looks out for the younger man and assumes the place of a father to him during his residence there. 591 607

When a child is born the new union is greatly solidified; it now has become a fully developed family, and except for the wife's being stolen by another man there would be little chance of permanent rupture even if she ran away. Tribal sentiment would be against her and her paramour or anyone who might have stolen her. The children would seldom go with her in such a case, and the strong attachment a Murngin mother has for her offspring would force her to come back to them. The writer has recorded several instances of a woman's going through the most difficult privations and risking probable death to return to her children after she had been stolen by a man from another tribe. 851 587 626 [152]

If a camp has been ambushed and the men all killed in a general tribal war, the women and children are taken by the conquerors and given as wives to the men who are in the right relationship to them. 727

A man wants as many wives as he can get and still keep his peace with the other males of his clan. The average is about three and a half for middle-aged men; but there is a recorded case of one native with seventeen wives, the majority having been obtained by stealing them or killing their husbands. He also married "wrong." There is a close correlation of having many wives with fighting strength, or with being the son of a man powerful in war who had thereby acquired a large number of women whose brothers would be gawels to 595 554

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waku, gawel and waku, and one case has been reported of momelker and dumungur. This last is very rare and has a strong taboo against it. All relationships except the above are completely taboo, and no one would any more think of such an extra-legal union than a normal man in our society would consider a liaison with his own mother. All the above affairs would be with distant relatives and not the actual ones. 837

Much indignation usually is caused by a gawel-waku liaison if discovered, though several were observed. This sentiment would not be that of the injured wife or husband alone, but of the tribe generally. Men having such a relationship with waku or momelker would be called dogs and considered evil-doers even by their own people, who might be defending them at the time from the attacks of the girl's husbands and relatives. The woman would most certainly receive a severe beating and occasionally be killed. 837 884

The regulation that a younger brother is not allowed near an older brother's wife whereas an older brother may be near a younger brother's wife of course applies here, since, except through a wrong marriage, all men who call each other brothers would call the same women galle, and they in turn would call these men dué. Even with such limitations the dué-galle affair is a most common form of adultery because, with the exception of this one taboo, there is no restriction to deter the pair or to make the most orthodox Murngin feel he is doing anything wrong. The momo-kaminyer relationship is the next least provocative of social condemnation. Of course, this would not be actual father's mother and brother's son's son, but a younger woman and a man in this relationship. 837 807

The men's attitude toward sexual union is one of extreme interest. While some speak but little of it, others make sex, food, and war the three subjects of their conversation. The women, however, seem even more interested than the men. They, too, vary considerably in their attitude; some are continually in trouble because of attempting to satisfy their desires by seducing young men, while others remain quiet and faithful to one man. All the men testified that there were no cold women; or rather, as they put it, all women were interested in the sexual relation. The evidence seems to verify their contentions; but caution must be exercised here since no man would admit that women were not interested in him. However, many of the men complained that their wives and other female relatives had too great an interest. 831 832

593 the people engaged in the trouble because it is believed a spirit of the
775 dead should not be disturbed by fights until after the last mourning
152 ceremony. It was as father and mother that the two protested, but
evidently through the child there was a greater bond of solidarity
between them.

605 When a young *dué* is circumcised, his near *galle* cut their thighs
304 "to show their sorrow." A *galle* always carries her *dué's* bones after
they have been exhumed.

605 *Dué Diramo* $\longleftrightarrow$ *Galle Diramo* (father's sister's son $\longleftrightarrow$ mother's
brother's son)

There are as many variations in the *dué-diramo* and *galle-diramo*
relationship as in the *dué-diramo* and *galle-mielk* type.

[60] This is one of the strongest relationships between men. The actual
brothers of ego's wife (who is the daughter of mother's brother) and
the consanguine father's sister's son (who is the husband of ego's
sister) have the strongest bond of any of the male *dué* and *galle*. Each
always comes to the other for assistance when he gets into trouble. When
[43] a man is giving presents to *gawel* for *gawel's* daughter, he also offers
them to *galle diramo* because he is brother to the wife.

When Narnarngo got himself into trouble with Bengaliwe his *dué*
immediately came to his assistance (see page 86). This is only one
instance of scores recorded by the writer.

Dué and *galle* engage in many enterprises together, such as canoe
building. The bond between them finds a full expression in all the
everyday activities of life. When a man is in trouble and needs a good
supply of weapons it is always his brothers, and his *dué* and *galle*, who
lend him extra spears and clubs, and who come to his assistance.

605 Male *dué* and *galle* have added strength given to their relationship
582 through indirect ties; *dué's* son and *galle's* daughter will later be
husband and wife; and *galle* will later be, or is, *gawel* to *dué's* son,
just as *dué* is *waku* to *galle's* father. This last relationship is one of
the most binding in Murngun society, and by indirect relationship it
occurs twice in the reciprocity that exists between *galle* and *dué*:
dué's son is *waku* to *galle*, and *dué* is *waku* to *galle's* father.

605 The full position of *dué diramo* and *galle diramo* cannot be realized
until one studies the behavior of *yeppa* and her brother and her posi-
tion as the wife of *dué*. The *dué's* position therefore includes the
following relationships: (1) to his wife; (2) to *galle's* father; and (3)
his son's relationship of *waku* to *dué's* *galle*. Every one of these elements

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this to be untrue. Balli called her mother by an obscene term because the latter was attempting to stop her from having an illegal relationship with a man who stood in the wrong kinship position to her. Natjurili knew this when he threw spears at her mother (his sister); still he felt impelled to throw them. 593

Possibly the structure of the kinship system will explain this seemingly anomalous behavior of a brother to his sister; or, to put it another way, structure can explain the function.

Yeppa does belong to her clan and family, but for most practical purposes her family and clan lose her to the husband's. If she is called "rubbish" and without relatives it means: "We put no real value on this woman, we have thrown her out of our clan, really she was never in it. Our family and clan have not been damaged by her loss as our sister and daughter since she is wakinu and does not belong to them, but we do value her as a wife and mother among your people; hence the various guarantees we make of keeping her with you. We don't want her back, we want to keep the relationship permanent; that is why we say, 'She is without relatives.'"

When dué swears at yeppa, and wawa or yukiyuko throws spears at her and her sisters, it is of course absurd that she, the offended, should suffer rather than the person responsible. The Murngin know this; they say, "It is silly, but when I hear those words at my sister I must do something. I throw spears at her."

In view of the feeling against hearing filthy speeches before one's sisters, the following structural interpretation seems to throw the most light on this behavior.

Yeppa is a member of one's own immediate family and patrilineal line. The emotional ties to her are very strong. She is from babyhood to childhood loved and petted by one's father. She is her brother's companion before he reaches the age of circumcision; thereafter, being felt to be such a near relative and with such a strong emotional reciprocation, she is of necessity taboo. This is the woman that a brother brows spears at for an act of which she is the victim. The interpretation is simple. Her patrilineal and family bond are very strong; everyone knows that in a final test a brother would fight his own dué if he went too far when mistreating her. Given the fact that a man cannot bear his sister sworn at, he must choose either to defend his sister and fight her husband,¹⁷ or to do nothing. If he chose the first, it 583 607 201

¹⁷ The situation in the relationship ego ↔ sister's husband exists in all ego's other relationships; to attack any clan relative would cause trouble.

593 would immediately endanger and possibly destroy for a time the
 607 whole lateral structure of his clan's kinship with the rest of the tribe.
 201 A fight with a *dué* of another clan would immediately call clan solidarity into action; all the brother's brothers, sons, fathers, et cetera, would necessarily come to his aid, just as these same relatives of *dué* would help *dué*, so that a general fight would result. A general re-exchange of women by forceful means would be a very likely possibility. Obviously only the most extreme circumstances would force such action.

Doing nothing is conceivable, but extremely difficult if the emotions are highly aroused by the *mirriri*. It is out of keeping with general Murngin behavior not to express an emotion socially. Therefore an entirely different possibility has been seized upon and socialized. The sister is treated as though she were her husband, and spears are thrown at her as though she and not he were the culprit. This saves any trouble between the clans.

The custom of throwing spears gives ritualistic expression to the *wakinu* concept, and to its opposite. The woman has been called a person without relatives, something actually impossible in the social life. She is rubbish to her family when the question arises whether she is to stay in her new capacity as mother or go back to her own clan. When brothers throw spears at their sisters, they demonstrate that she is not a part of her own family, even though *dué* calls her by terms slandering her as well as her family and clan; they will not act against the husband or his clan. On the other hand, the custom expresses extreme displeasure at hearing one's sister abused. "This woman is called sister by me, I cannot hear obscenity used against her. I throw spears at her to show my dislike, because if I throw them at you, it would cause trouble out of proportion to the cause of it."

A man throws spears at his sister not only when her *dué* swears at her but when anyone else does. Because of clan solidarity, he could not throw them at any member of his own clan except *yeppa*, which is allowed by the *wakinu* concept.

593 The remaining problem is: Why does a man throw spears at all
 607 his sisters instead of confining his act to the one sworn at? All women
 201 who stand in the relation of sister to ego, no matter how distant the clan, are treated in exactly the same manner (not spoken to, touched, et cetera); the *mirriri* falls under this class of behavior, both as belonging to a general pattern and as an extension of the behavior that comes from the feeling surrounding a blood sister. Also, throwing spears at